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ABSTRACT

This document is an overview of the similarities and differences existing among the basic education policies of the member states in the European Community. The responses of member states to a questionnaire drawn up by EURYDICE (the Education Information Network in the European Community) are analyzed. There are three main aspects to the analysis: (1) the components of basic education; (2) characteristics of the ways in which the contents of basic education are defined and have evolved; and (3) evaluation. The measurement of responses to the questions concerning these topics is compiled and provided in table and chart format. A statement regarding the background and purpose of EURYDICE also is included. (DB)

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BASIC EDUCATION AND COMPETENCE IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Analysis prepared in the context of the seminar of Senior Officials on Basic Education

June 25-27, 1987
Brussels

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INTRODUCTION

An overview on basic education was drafted initially for those taking part in the Seminar of Senior Officials on Basic Education, which took place on 25-27 June 1987 in Brussels and was organized jointly by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of Ministers for Education and the Commission of the European Communities.

A working document chiefly consisting of summary tables was drawn up by the EURYDICE European Unit on the basis of information supplied by the EURYDICE National Units in reply to a questionnaire launched within the network at the request of the organizers of the seminar, and was submitted to the participants to be examined.

This analysis is founded on the above-mentioned working document which has been redrafted to incorporate the results of the Seminar debates as well as the changes and additions that some participants proposed to the EURYDICE European Unit in writing.

The period during which information was to be collected ended on 30 September 1987.

The presentation of the information in the form of tables with attached commentaries clearly shows the differences or similarities existing between the basic education policies in the Member States of the European Community.

Basic education as referred to in this analysis is understood to be the education provided in each Member State during the period of compulsory full-time education, irrespective of the structures of the educational establishments attended by the pupils during this period.

Basic competence means the education (knowledge), skills (know-how) and attitudes (behaviour) and understanding that each Member State hopes that all pupils will have acquired by the end of the prescribed period of full-time education.

To facilitate the interpretation of situations varying according to the Member States, the years of full-time compulsory education will be numbered from 1 (beginning of compulsory schooling at the age of 5 or 6) to 8,9,10 or 11 depending on the number of years of study covered by the compulsory period.

This period usually encompasses the period of attendance at primary school and at a first secondary school cycle.

As a rule, basic education and basic competence are established in the study programmes or curricula, whether national, regional or local.
This analysis mainly covers the following aspects :

The components of basic education

- relative importance of each of the fields of study in basic education in terms of the percentage of time devoted to them

- determination of the stage at which teaching should begin in a first or second modern language

- the identification of interdisciplinary themes arising in several different fields.

Characteristics of the ways in which the contents of basic education are defined and evolved

- the determining of the contents of basic education and the parties implicated in this decision

- the drawing up of curricula in terms of subjects to be taught or objectives to be attained

- the adaptation of the contents of basic education to scientific, technical, socio-cultural and economic developments.

Evaluation

- evaluation of the results of a given type of basic education by an educational authority

- examinations to test the pupils' basic competence

- repeating a class

- bodies in charge of developing tests to check the acquisition of basic competence.

Any requests for information concerning the availability of this document should be addressed to the EURYDICE EUROPEAN UNIT - Rue Archimède 17, Bte 17 - B - 1040 Brussels.

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1. THE COMPONENTS OF BASIC EDUCATION

1. 1) Relative importance of each of the fields of study in basic education in terms of the percentage of time devoted to them :

To facilitate the analysis, the disciplines that enter into basic education have been grouped together in the seven following fields :

1 : oral and written expression and communication (mother tongue and other languages);

2 : scientific languages (mathematics, physical and natural sciences);

3 : social sciences;

4 : other forms of expression and communication;

5 : technical and technological subjects;

6 : physical education;

7 : ethics and religious instruction.

Item 4 (other forms of expression and communication) actually covers all artistic subjects.

Item 5 (technical and technological subjects) also covers education in the new technologies.

All the information furnished by the Member-States appears in five summary tables.

Notes

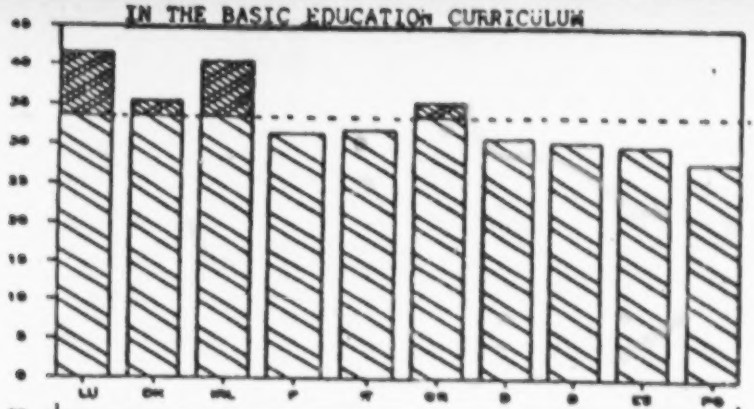
a) Given the absence of national regulations, the United Kingdom (except SC) and the Netherlands were unable to provide any information. In Scotland, although there are no national regulations, there is strong guidance and consensus practice arising from advice given to education authorities and head teachers by the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum.

b) In the case of table n°1 which illustrates the relative proportion of the different subjects taught within the framework of basic education, the school years taken into consideration in each Member-State are as follows :

IT	:	3 years of basic education ("Scuola Media" only)
IRL	:	Average of 4th and 8th year of school
PO	:	6 years of basic education
B, ES	:	8 years of basic education
DK, GR, F, LU	:	9 years of basic education
D	:	10 years of basic education

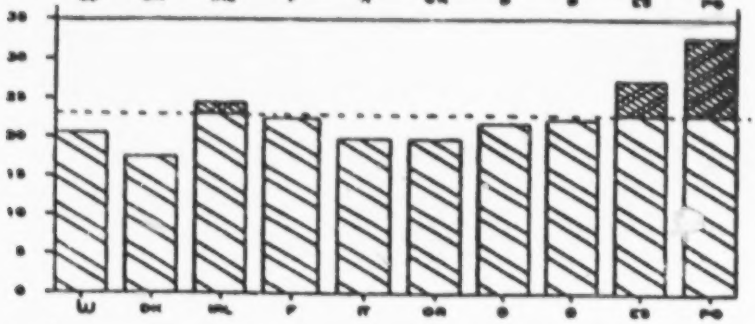
IN THE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Field n° 1 : languages



EUR average 3

Field n° 2 : scientific subjects

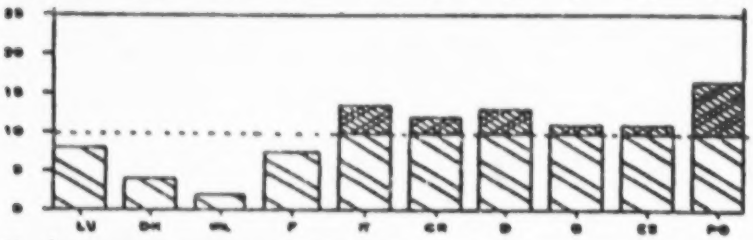


EUR average 23

Field n° 3 : social sciences

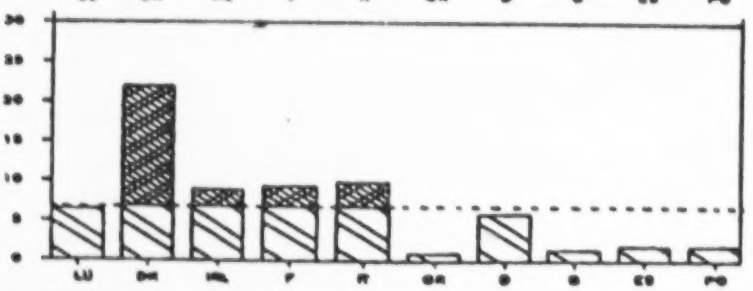
EUR average 1(

Field n° 4 : artistic subjects



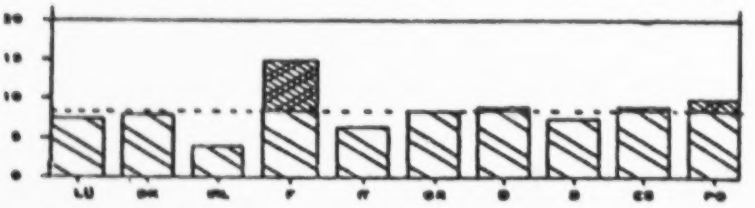
EUR average 9.

Field n° 5 : technologies



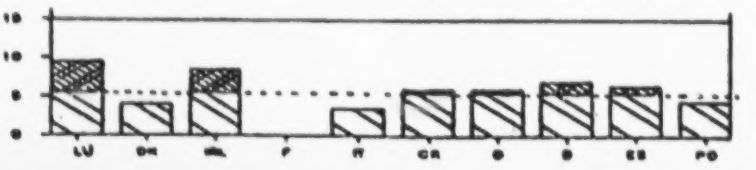
EUR average 6.

Field n° 6 : physical education



EUR average 8.

Field n° 7 ethics and religious instruction

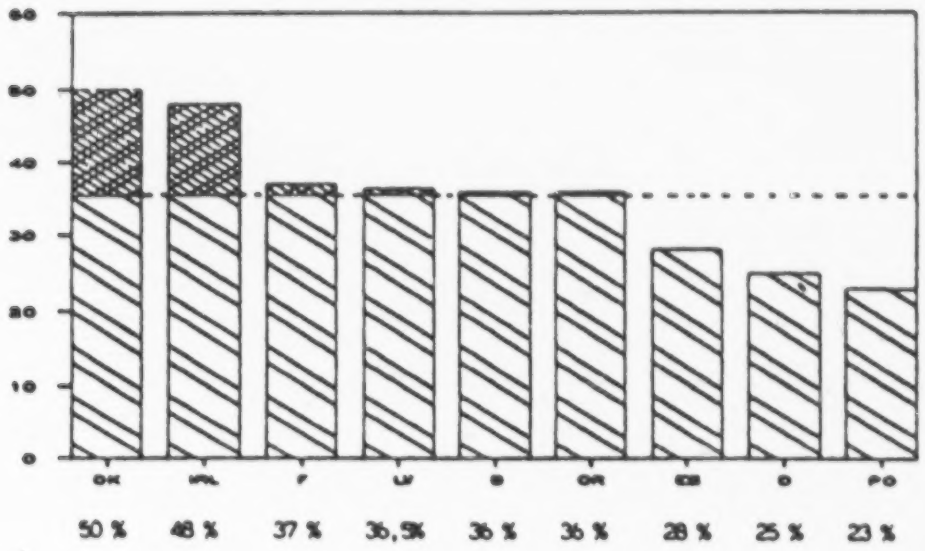


EUR average 5.

TABLE NO. 2

RELATIVE PROPORTION OF LANGUAGE COURSES

(field 1) DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL



EUR average (9) 35.5

No information from Italy

Ireland : 4th year

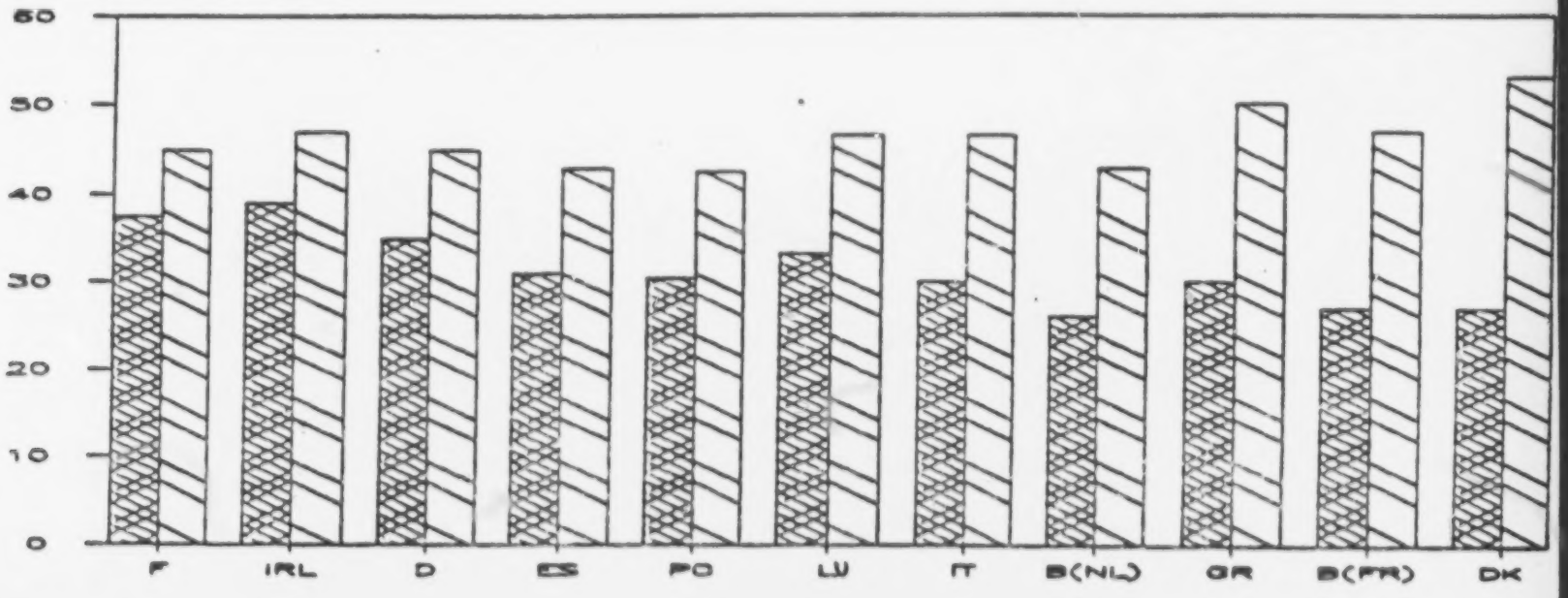
The German Federal Republic : the teaching of the language is one of the fundaments of any type of education.

TABLE N° 3 : RELATIVE PROPORTION OF THE DIFFERENT FIELDS

Scientific and technological (field 2 + field 5)

Literary : mother tongue and foreign languages, social sciences (field 1 + field 3)

During THE LAST YEAR OF SCHOOL (1)

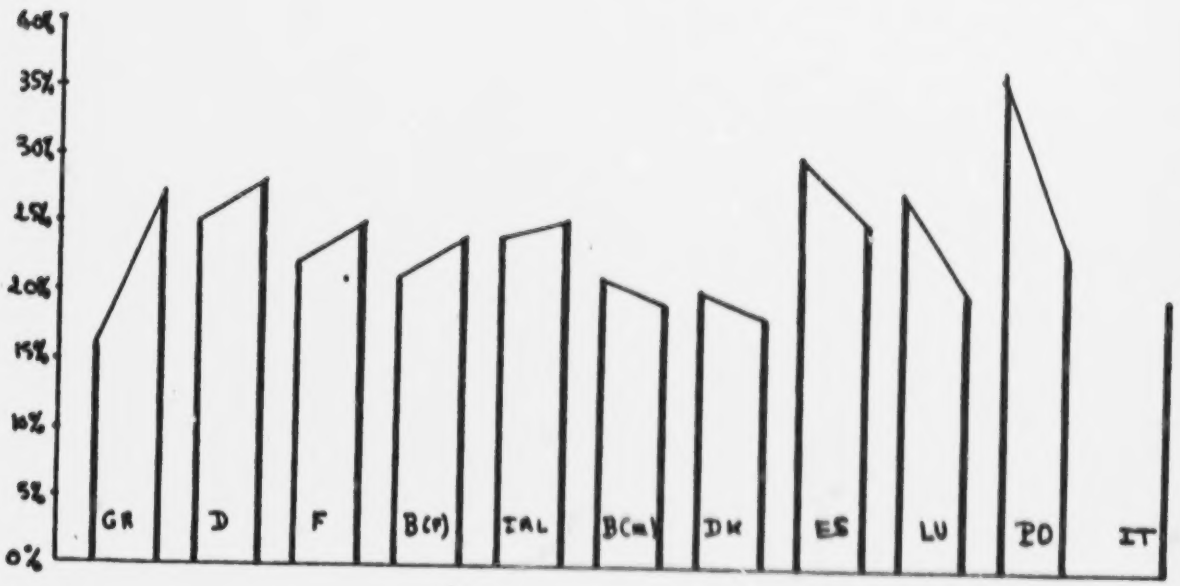


Ratio	F	IRL	D	ES	PO	LU	IT	B(NL)	GR	B(FR)	DK
:	0,83	0,83	0,78	0,72	0,72	0,72	0,64	0,60	0,60	0,57	0,51

(1) PO : 6th year
B, ES and IT : 8th year
DK, F, IRL, LU, GR : 9th year
D : 10th year

TABLE N° 4

EVOLUTION IN THE RELATIVE PROPORTION
OF SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTS (field 2)
BETWEEN THE FIRST (1) AND THE LAST (2) YEAR OF SCHOOL



(1) 4th year of school in Ireland
No information from Italy

(2) 6th year : PO
8th year : B, ES, IT
9th year : DK, F, IRL, LU and GR
10th year : D

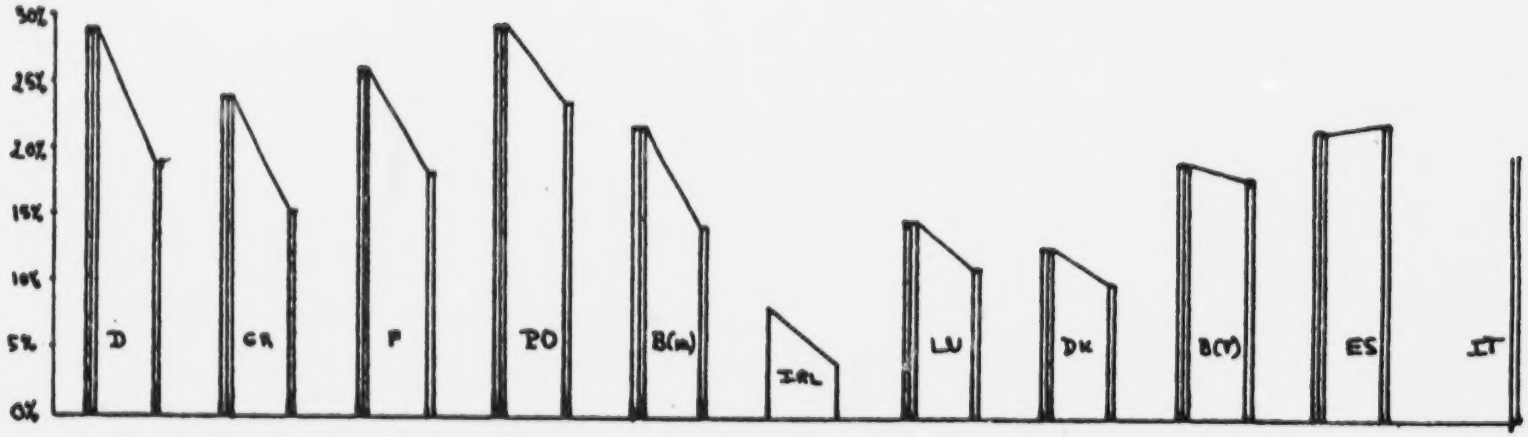
TABLE N° 5

EVOLUTION IN THE AVERAGE RELATIVE PROPORTION OF

ARTISTIC SUBJECTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (field 4 + field 6)

BETWEEN THE FIRST THREE YEARS (1) AND THE LAST TWO YEARS (2)

OF SCHOOL



(1) Ireland : 4th year - No information from Italy

(2) Portugal : 5th, 6th year
Belgium, Spain, Italy : 7th, 8th year
Denmark, France, Ireland, Luxembourg and Greece : 8th and 9th year
GFR : 9th and 10th year

1. 2) Stage at which teaching begins in a first and second modern language

Summary table per Member-State

	B	DK	D	GR	ES	F	IRL	IT	LU	NL	PO	UK ex SC	SC
10													O*
9					O							O	
8						O				O			●
7	O	O	O*	●			O			●*	O	●*	
6					●	●		●*					
5	●	●	●	(●)							●		
4													
3													
2									O				
1							●*		●				●*

● first modern language

O second modern language

* D in "Realschule", "Gymnasium", "Gesamtschule"

* IRL English/Irish

* IT In the new study programmes beginning in the school year 1987/88, provision is made for the teaching of a foreign language in primary school

* NL this is the general rule; the law stipulates that English be taught at primary school; the school is free to decide when to begin

* UK (ex SC) this is the general rule, but the stage at which a foreign language is introduced may vary from school to school

* SC Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland. A second modern foreign language may be started in years 9 or 10.

To get a general idea of how modern languages are taught in the official schools of the Member-States, please see the document "The Teaching of Languages in the European Community" (The EURYDICE European Unit, Brussels, 1987).

Comments

In all the Member-States, most pupils have the opportunity to learn at least one foreign language from the first year of secondary education.

In primary school, possibilities for learning languages are few.

When modern language courses are provided, these are generally experimental, optional, or only in certain schools.

However, in Belgium and Luxembourg where there is more than one national language, these different national languages are taught; in Luxembourg, from the first year, in Belgium, from the third year in Brussels and in the bilingual or German-speaking regions and from the fifth year in the rest of the country.

In Ireland, English and Irish are taught from the first year and are compulsory.

It is not possible to provide precise information on the United Kingdom, where the school curriculum is not at present centrally prescribed. If the Education Reform Bill now before the UK Parliament becomes law, a National Curriculum will be introduced for 5-16 year olds in all schools, maintained by central and local government. The subjects included will be English, mathematics, science, technology, history, geography, a modern foreign language (from age 12), art, music and physical education. As now, religious education will also be required. The National Curriculum in England and Wales will not lay down the time to be spent on each subject.

In Scotland, the first modern foreign language is normally introduced in S1 (year 8) and a second may be introduced in S2 (year 9) or S3 (year 10). In Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland, Gaelic is taught in primary schools.

1. 3) Interdisciplinary themes arising in several different fields of basic education

The interdisciplinary themes in each Member-State are listed hereunder.

B	Road safety, health education, European dimension
DK	Road safety, sex education, health education, Swedish and Norwegian, foreign religions and other philosophies, educational and vocational guidance
D	Road safety, health education, vocational guidance, basic education in the N.I.T., peace, human rights, the environment, Europe, understanding the role of men and women
GR	The environment, moral and religious education, knowledge of national traditions, education in democracy
ES	Inter-disciplinary education is left to the initiative of each teacher
F	The art of living and consumption, exploration and development of the national heritage, influence and freedom of the press, individual freedom and responsibility within society, prevention and assistance : knowledge of risks, possibilities open to everyone
IRL	Post-primary study programmes are based on specific subjects and do not contain any interdisciplinary themes. Study programmes for primary education are, on the contrary, integrated. Examples of such integration are : the development of language during art classes, manual work, mathematics, the application of mathematics in the study of the environment, the integration of social, historical and geographical themes
IT	The law concerning basic education is placing more and more emphasis on the planning of courses through staff meetings bringing together all the teachers and teachers' committees in order to achieve interdisciplinarity. A further means proposed is the introduction of integration activities organized for groups of pupils from one or several classes, in which cross-running themes may be tackled

LU	Basic education contains very few interdisciplinary themes except perhaps in some subjects connected with ecology and sex education.
NL	Human rights, peace, the environment, cross-cultural education, the European and international dimension of education, health education, sex education, consumer education
PO	In the perspective of interdisciplinarity which is desired in schools, one must consider that the various subjects are to be treated within the framework of the different fields of study
UK (Exc Sc)	A broad range of interdisciplinary themes are likely to be included in what children learn, including discrimination (race & sex), the use of language, health and sex education, economic awareness, (including understanding industry and consumer education), international and European understanding, the environment, road safety education and I.T. skills.
SC	Health education, environmental studies, religious, moral and social education

Comments

In most of the Member-States, basic education contains interdisciplinary themes. In countries where schools enjoy a great amount of freedom in organizing courses, it is difficult to obtain precise information.

Nevertheless, a few common themes that were mentioned by several Member-States can be distinguished :

- The environment
- Human Rights
- Health education
- Education in road safety
- Europe
- Sex education

2. Ways in which the contents of basic education are defined and evolved

2. 1) Table concerning national, regional and local regulations in each Member-State

M.S.	NATIONAL REGULATIONS	REGIONAL DIVERSIFICATION	LOCAL DIVERSIFICATION
B	X		
DK	X		
D		Länder regulations X	
GR	X		
ES	X	Within the autonomous regions X	
F	X		
IRL	X		
IT	X		
LU	X		
NL	X		
PO	X		
UK			X
SC		X	X

Comments

In most of the Member-States, the contents of basic education are subject to national regulations.

In the German Federal Republic, the Länder are mostly responsible for educational matters, including regulations concerning basic education.

In the United Kingdom, currently the only compulsory subject in England and Wales is religious education but the Government plans to introduce a National Curriculum (see page 12).

The provision of education in Scotland is one of the duties of the nine regional and three islands councils, which are known as education authorities. They are responsible for the construction of buildings, the provision of equipment and materials and the employment of teachers and other staff. Their responsibility for the curriculum taught in schools is normally delegated to individual head-teachers.

Guidance on the content of the school curriculum is regularly issued to education authorities and, through them, to head-teachers by the Secretary of State for Scotland. This guidance is based on advice given to him by H.M. Inspectors of Schools and the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, the Secretary of State's main advisory body on the curriculum.

The only elements of the curriculum which are laid down by law (The Education (Scotland) Act, 1986) are religious education and Gaelic, in areas where Gaelic is spoken.

In several countries, national regulations leave a great deal of room for initiative which makes it possible to adapt the curricula to regional or local characteristics (ES, IT). This is also the case in Denmark where the municipalities may even draw up their own curricula in accordance with national objectives.

In Portugal, the new Basic Law on the Education System also contains provisions concerning regional diversification.

2. 2) Table concerning the manner in which the contents of basic education are determined and the parties implicated in this decision

M.S.	Manner in which the contents are determined	Parties implicated
B	primary education : by the law secondary education : by the King	the school authorities, inspectors, organizing bodies other than the State
DK	guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education	the municipal council approves the educational plan worked out by schools on the basis of the Ministry of Education's guidelines
D	by the Ministries of Cultural Affairs in the Länder	teachers and schools, inspectors, parents' associations, teachers' associations, the Church, scientists, employers, trade-unions
GR	by the Ministry of Education	the Pedagogical Institute
ES	by the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities	education experts
F	by the Ministry of Education	Committees of experts and educationalists as well as various members of the school staff
IRL	by the Ministry of Education	primary education : inspectors secondary education : National Council for Curriculum & Assessment
IT	through a Decree of the President of the Republic	the National Education Council, research committees, the Board of the establishment, staff meetings, teachers, representatives elected by the parents

LU	by the Ministry of Education	<u>for primary education</u> : committees (inspectors, school-masters, post-primary school teachers) <u>for secondary education</u>: committees (principals and teachers)
PO	by the Ministry of Education	Official committees (working parties made up of education experts and teachers)
UK (except SC)	in England & Wales, by local education authorities, school governing bodies and head teachers influenced by Government policies and the reports & advice of HM Inspectorate	teachers, teacher trainers, local inspectors, examination boards, employees and representatives of the Community
SC	by the Scottish Education Department in partnership with the local authorities, the examination boards (SEB), and the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum. Head-teachers, subject to the advice of these authorities, are responsible for the curriculum taught in the schools	advice and guidance by HM Inspectorate of Schools and the Consultative Committee on Curriculum (CCC)

<u>Comments</u>

In the majority of the Member-States, the components of basic education are determined at national level. Generally speaking the curricula are established by official committees appointed by the Ministers for Education.

With respect to the parties implicated in the decision, priority is given in all Member-States to teachers and "education experts" ; however , several of the parties mentioned, i.e. parents, employers, employees, etc ... (B, IT, D, NL, UK except SC), do not, strictly speaking belong to the education system.

2. 3) The adaptation of the contents of basic education to scientific, technical, socio-cultural and economic developments

All the Member-States indicate that their study programmes are continuously and periodically subjected to revision, but give few details concerning the bodies or the means employed to implement this continuous revision.

2. 4) The drawing up of basic education curricula in terms of knowledge of disciplines or objectives to be attained by the pupils

Summary table

MEMBER-STATES	KNOWLEDGE OF DISCIPLINES	OBJECTIVES TO BE ATTAINED BY THE PUPILS
B	X	X
DK	X	
D	X	X
GR		X
ES		X
F	X	X
IRL	X	
IT	X	X
LU	X	
NL	X	(X)
PO	X	
UK (except SC)		X
SC	X	X

Comments

It is very difficult to make a simple analysis of such a complex matter. Indeed, how is it possible to make a clear distinction between "knowledge of disciplines" and "objectives" ?

The information provided by the Member-States reflects, however, their idea of which of the two plays a dominant role in the determining of their curricula.

Four countries (B, IT, D, F) consider that "disciplines" and "objectives" play an equal role in defining the curriculum, whereas the others are more categorical in their assessment :

- five countries indicate that "disciplines" play a dominant role (DK, IRL, LU, PO, NL)

- three others indicate that "objectives" play a dominant role (GR, ES, UK (except SC), SC).

The UK Government's Bill to introduce a National Curriculum for England and Wales will indicate the disciplines and will require targets to be drawn up covering the objectives to be attained.

In Scotland, while "objectives" play a strong role, especially in primary education, the curriculum in secondary schools is arranged in "disciplines" though each "discipline" has well-defined "objectives".

3. EVALUATION OF BASIC EDUCATION

3. 1) Evaluation of the results of basic education by an educational authority

MEMBER-STATES	EVALUATION METHODS
B	Evaluation is based on both tests for admission to the next class and examinations leading to a certificate
DK	There is no official system. Any form of evaluation that may exist is part of the teachers' responsibility
D	Evaluation by inspectors, schools and teachers; inspection with scientific support when new elements are introduced into basic education; corrective measures based on the combined experience of the teachers
ES	Studies and surveys are conducted by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science with a view to evaluating the results obtained in the field of basic education.
GR	The results of a given type of basic education are evaluated by comparing the pupils' performance with a set educational standard
F	Surveys are conducted on a regular basis by the Evaluation and Forward Study Directorate in the Ministry of Education and research is undertaken by various bodies, in particular, by the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, to keep informed on the results obtained in educational establishments
IRL	Evaluation by inspectors
IT	Evaluation on the basis of opinions stated during staff meetings and school examinations
LU	The results are evaluated on the basis of end-of-term and end-of-year tests and examinations

NL	Evaluation of school results by inspectors ; for primary education, surveys are conducted periodically to get a general idea of the standard reached ; for secondary education, research is carried out by the Central Statistical Office (CBS) in different classes to follow the progress of secondary school pupils
PO	Continuous evaluation of the teaching and learning process with a direct influence on the pupils, based on an implicit assessment of the teacher's work
UK (except SC)	By Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, by the "Assessment of Performance Unit" (APU) which was established to obtain information on the general level of performance within the education system and on the evaluation of this level over the years
SC	By Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, by advisers employed by the local authorities. Schools and teachers also have a responsibility for the evaluation of pupils.

Comments

The information obtained from the Member-States concerned the evaluation of the results of basic education and therefore the entire system.

Assessing the pupils' results by means of examinations or tests enabling them to move up to the next class is, in fact, the principal method used by the Member-States to measure the results of education.

However, several Member States also mentioned other means of evaluation.:

- inspection procedures

- research or statistical surveys carried out by specialized bodies (D, ES, F, NL, UK except SC).

3. 2) Testing the pupil's basic competence through examinations

MEMBER-STATES	METHODS EMPLOYED
B	As a rule, final examinations are held in every school. Cantonal examinations are organized at the end of the sixth year of primary school. The examinations cover the entire curriculum.
DK	Examinations are organized at national level after the 9th and 10th year of study.
D	In most of the Länder, a school-leaving diploma is awarded if the pupil's results during the 9th (10th) year of schooling are considered satisfactory in all subjects. In Baden-Württemberg, the school-leaving diploma is issued in the "Hauptschule", "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" at the end of the 9th|10th year after a final examination.
GR	Examinations are held to test the pupils' acquisition of knowledge. Continuous assessment concerns only the gymnasia (lower secondary).
ES	Evaluation of pupils is continuous and formative. There are no standard examinations or tests.
F	An examination entitling the pupils to a "diplôme national du brevet" is organized at the end of secondary school. Its basic aim is to determine whether basic knowledge has been acquired at the end of compulsory schooling.
IRL	An examination is organized at national level at the middle and at the end of secondary education.
IT	Examinations known as prima licenza are held at the end of the 5th year ; other examinations known as licenze media are organized at the end of the 8th year, which is the last year of compulsory school attendance.
LU	To pass from the 6th year of primary school into secondary/technical secondary education, a special entrance examination is organized at national level ; admittance to complementary education depends on the successful completion of the 6th year of primary education (without an extra examination).
NL	Examinations vary from one type of school to another and do not always concern the period of compulsory education.

PO	There are no examinations, but final comprehensive evaluation tests prepared by each educational establishment.
UK (except SC)	The General Certificate of Education at Ordinary Level and the Certificate of Secondary Education have been replaced by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the first certificates of which will be awarded in Summer 1988
SC	The "Standard Grade" examination is in the process of being introduced for 15/16 year old pupils at S4 level. This will replace the existing "Ordinary Grade" examination. There are proposals to introduce "in-school" testing at P4 and P7 levels, but as yet this has not been introduced

Comments

Apart from Spain, Portugal and Greece, all the Member-States organize examinations to test the basic competence of pupils.

Generally speaking, these examinations are held at the end of the period of compulsory education.

However, in Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg, there are also examinations at the end of primary school.

Eurydice
The Education Information Network in the European Community

Educational cooperation in the Community

The educational systems in Community countries vary considerably and this variety, which is the result of historic and cultural factors, itself constitutes a great wealth which should be preserved.
On the other hand it is in the interest of everyone to draw benefit from the experiences and projects of partner countries within the Community.

Educational policy makers in the European Community have long been aware of the value of information concerning innovations and changes introduced in other Member States in order that their own decisions might be well founded on the knowledge of alternative possibilities of practice, and the Member States agreed to promote close cooperation in the field of education at Community level.

In February 1976 the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Education adopted an action programme in the field of education. They agreed among other things to set up an information Network in order to increase and improve the circulation of information in the area of education policy*.
This information Network, known as EURYDICE, is designed therefore to underpin the developing programme of educational cooperation within the European Community.

The Education Committee of the European Community which has the task of coordinating and monitoring the action programme recommended that the use of Eurydice should in the first phase be limited to those in policy making positions. The Education Committee consists of representatives of the Member States and of the Commission.

In accordance with their own distinctive education structures, each Member State has designated at least one National Unit to participate in the Network and the Commission of the European Communities has arranged with the European Cultural Foundation the establishment of the European Eurydice Unit, which is part of the Network.
Eurydice is based on the mutual cooperation of the national units and the European Unit. In addition the latter coordinates and animates the network.

* Official Journal n C38, 19.02.1976. P1

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